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Preservation Resources

University of Minnesota
Extension –
<http://z.umn.edu/gtg>

National Food Preservation
Center
<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>
[Food Preservation Mini
Module Series](#)

Answerline: 800-854-1678
for your home food
preservation questions

Twitter: umnfoodsafety

Which food preservation method?

“How do you know which preservation method to use?” “For which vegetable?” asked a young woman in a food preservation class. She is interested in learning how to preserve the vegetables in her garden, but is uncertain if she should can, freeze, pickle, or dry!

The class participants shared: *“I freeze everything, it’s easier.” “My family prefers canned green beans.” “We like frozen sweet corn.” “I just started drying tomatoes and really like the flavor in the winter.” “Grandma made pickled beets.”*



There are many ways to preserve vegetables and fruits and numerous factors that play a role in preservation choices.

- A key factor is the taste, texture and quality of the preserved food.
- Our knowledge, expertise and comfort level with a preservation method and its required equipment is essential to safe preservation.
- Consider your time and energy level.
- Space availability, whether freezer or fruit cellar, will influence our choices.
- The cost of different home preservation methods needs to be weighed in the family budget.
- Family traditions and preferences, such as the pickling of beets, play a role in our choices.

How do you, or did you, select the preservation method for the vegetables and fruits that you “put-up”?

Whatever factors influence the home food preservation method you choose, always put safety first. Food preservation, via any method, is a science that requires our attention, knowledge and respect.

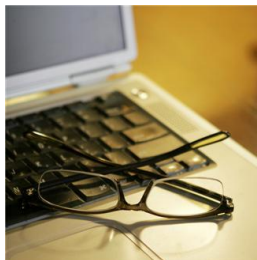
AnswerLine

Whether you’re making your first batch of salsa or you’ve been canning for years, you may have questions. Where to go for answers? **AnswerLine:** Talk to food preservation experts by calling toll-free 1-800-854-1678, Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. After hours, check the website: www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/

AnswerLine provides research-based answers to your questions.

Searching for Reliable Information

When searching the internet, how do you know if the food preservation information is reliable?



Always use preservation information based on current research. USDA takes the lead to share results of scientifically tested recipes, processing methods, and times conducted by a University.

In [Preservation Resources](#) (on page 1) we provide a list of reliable resources including the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Also, recent editions of Ball publications are research-based.

When searching the web for food preservation information, look for these red flags:

- Be suspicious of short cuts.
- Directions for canning non-pickled vegetables and meats in a water-bath or steam canner.
- The recipe was “made-up” or changed by the person providing the information.
- The writer says it is okay to process jars in the oven, dishwasher or appliance other than pressure or boiling water bath canner.
- Directions tell you to pour hot food into jars and put on lids with no processing.

New to Canning: No Canner?



If you do not have a water bath canner for high acid foods, you can create a canner from a stock pot with a lid that is deep enough to hold a rack, the jars and space to cover the jars with at least one inch of boiling water. Also, allow a little extra space so rapidly boiling water doesn't go over the edge of the pot. A rack can be a round cooling rack, a perforated disk with holes to allow water circulation, or you can create a rack by tying jar rings together with twisties.

For low acid foods, there are no alternatives for a pressure canner. Do not use a small pressure cooker for pressure canning.

Wash Produce before Preserving

It is important to clean fresh produce before preserving even if they will be peeled. Washing fruits and vegetables reduces the chance of bacteria from the soil contaminating the produce.



Before washing produce, make sure your hands, equipment and working surfaces are clean.

- Work in small quantities to prevent loss of quality and nutrients.
- Wash produce with clean running water that is close to the temperature of the produce. If the water is too warm or too cold, any bacteria near an opening may get “sucked” into the produce and contaminate it.
- Wash through several changes of clean water in a clean sink. Do not let produce soak in water.
- Wash and drain produce BEFORE removing caps, cores, pits, seeds or peels.
- Wash produce with rinds and skins using a vegetable brush under running water.
- Lift produce out of the water so the dirt is washed off and will not get back on the food.

First In First Out

We are always going to remember what the food packages are and when we put them in the freezer! But as we find “surprises,” mystery packages of frozen produce, we vow to do better this season with dating and labeling.

Date marking and labeling of packages allows us to practice First in – First out, an inventory rotation process to ensure quality frozen food. Also, keeping a written freezer inventory is a helpful tool for freezer management. Visit <http://z.umn.edu/zu> for a freezer inventory chart you can implement as you freeze fruits and vegetables this season.

Organizing your freezer into sections for different types of foods helps save time as you search for a particular food. You can divide your freezer with baskets, wire racks or shelves.

Freezing Green Beans

Achieving quality frozen green beans can be a preservation frustration! The end product may be called—rubbery, tough or mushy!

For quality frozen green beans:

- Select a bean variety identified for “freezing” on seed packet
- Harvest early in the morning, especially if the weather is hot, for peak flavor and crispness
- Harvest young tender pods—firm, straight, not lumpy
- Process promptly after harvesting or keep cooled in the fridge or with ice
- Wash in cold water, cut into 2 to 4 inch lengths
- Water blanch 3 minutes— begin counting time when the water returns to boil
- Cool in ice water for 3 minutes, drain, package, freeze



Water is a factor in successful freezing of vegetables. Hard water contains larger amounts of minerals than soft water. However, large amounts of minerals can toughen peas and beans. An example of the water dilemma is green beans. When canning, very soft water can cause mushy green beans, hard water is preferred. But, when blanching green beans for freezing, hard water will toughen them—softer water is then preferred.

Refrigerator pickles

A key safety component of these pickles is as their name states—they **MUST** be stored in the REFRIGERATOR. There are recipes out and about giving directions for the pickles to sit on the cupboard for a week or more—this is not a safe fresh pack pickle method.

Because refrigerator pickles are not heat processed, they must be stored in the refrigerator.

Suggested recipes are available in the *Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving*.

Blueberries

Blueberries have arrived! When it comes to preserving the blueberry bounty—blueberries freeze exceptionally well. And, it is EASY to do!



To freeze, spread blueberries in a single-layer on a tray, place in the freezer until frozen, about 2-3 hours. Remove from tray, package in freezer container, label, date, and place in the freezer.

When it comes to washing blueberries before freezing, there are two camps. There is research that shows that washing blueberries prior to freezing can result in slightly tougher skin once the berries thaw. Others say the difference is slight, and they'd rather have clean berries in the freezer.

- If the berries are washed before frozen, you can enjoy eating them frozen
- If you're planning to use the berries in a pie or baked dessert, washing them before freezing shouldn't matter.
- If you decide to wash before freezing, rinse the berries gently and let them dry completely before freezing.

Remember for quality frozen berries, maintain your freezer temperature at 0° F or below.

“Supersweet” Sweet Corn



New varieties of sweet corn are sometimes referred to as “supersweet” corn. They contain more natural sugars than the older, traditional varieties. The natural sugars also seem to improve the keeping quality of sweet corn. As a result, some people freeze the supersweet corn without blanching and still have an acceptable product. For longer storage (more than 4 months), it is still best to blanch the corn so it will not have an off-flavor.

Freezing whole kernel sweet corn – Water blanch 4 minutes. Cool, drain and cut from cob. Package, leaving ½ inch headspace and freeze.

A Blue Ribbon Winner

When visiting a county fair, the colorful jars of home canned fruits and vegetables with a proud blue, red or white ribbon displayed may have caught your eye.



Have you ever thought about entering your salsa, dill pickles or strawberry jam in the fair? If so, contact your local fair board secretary to receive a fair book or premium list. This listing gives the requirements you will need to know and follow to exhibit.

For state fair exhibitor information view: <http://z.umn.edu/statefair>.

You may have a blue ribbon winner!

Cottage Food Law

“The passage of the Cottage Food Law in Minnesota has changed sections of current legislation under MS 28A.15, specifically, subdivisions 9 and 10 (i.e. jams, jellies, baked goods, pickles). This new law affects all persons selling food formally under 28A.15 subdivisions 9 and 10, and persons starting business on or after July 1, 2015.” Source: MDA

For further guidance information see the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s website: <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/>

So Easy to Preserve

The 6th edition of *So Easy to Preserve*, an excellent preservation resource, is now available at <http://setp.uga.edu/>. Chapters in the 388 page book include *Preserving Food, Canning, Pickled Products, Sweet Spreads and Syrups, Freezing and Drying*. There are also 10 new product recommendations in this edition.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there any safe methods for making herb flavored oils?

Herbs and oils are both low-acid and together could support the growth of disease-causing *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. Oils may be flavored with fresh or dried herbs if they are made up for fresh use or stored in the refrigerator and used within 4 days. There are no canning recommendations.

Is it necessary to exhaust a pressure canner?

Yes, it is very important to allow steam to escape for 10 minutes before closing the valve, or placing the weight on the vent. If the canner is not exhausted, the inside temperature may not correspond to the pressure on the gauge.

Why do pickle recipes say to cut off the blossom end of the cucumber?

The blossom end contains enzymes that can cause softening. Remove at least 1/16th inch from the blossom end.

Is it safe to process food in the oven?

No. This can be very dangerous because the temperature varies due to the oven regulators and the heat circulation. Dry heat is very slow in penetrating into jars of food. Also, jars tend to explode easily in the oven. There is no researched-based recommendation.

How long will canned food keep?

Properly canned food stored in a cool, dry place will retain optimum eating quality for at least one year. Canned food stored in a warm place near a range or a furnace may lose quality in a few weeks or months.

For more food safety information visit our website: extension.umn.edu/food-safety.

If you would like to stop receiving the Home Food Preservation newsletter, please email schmi374@umn.edu.

